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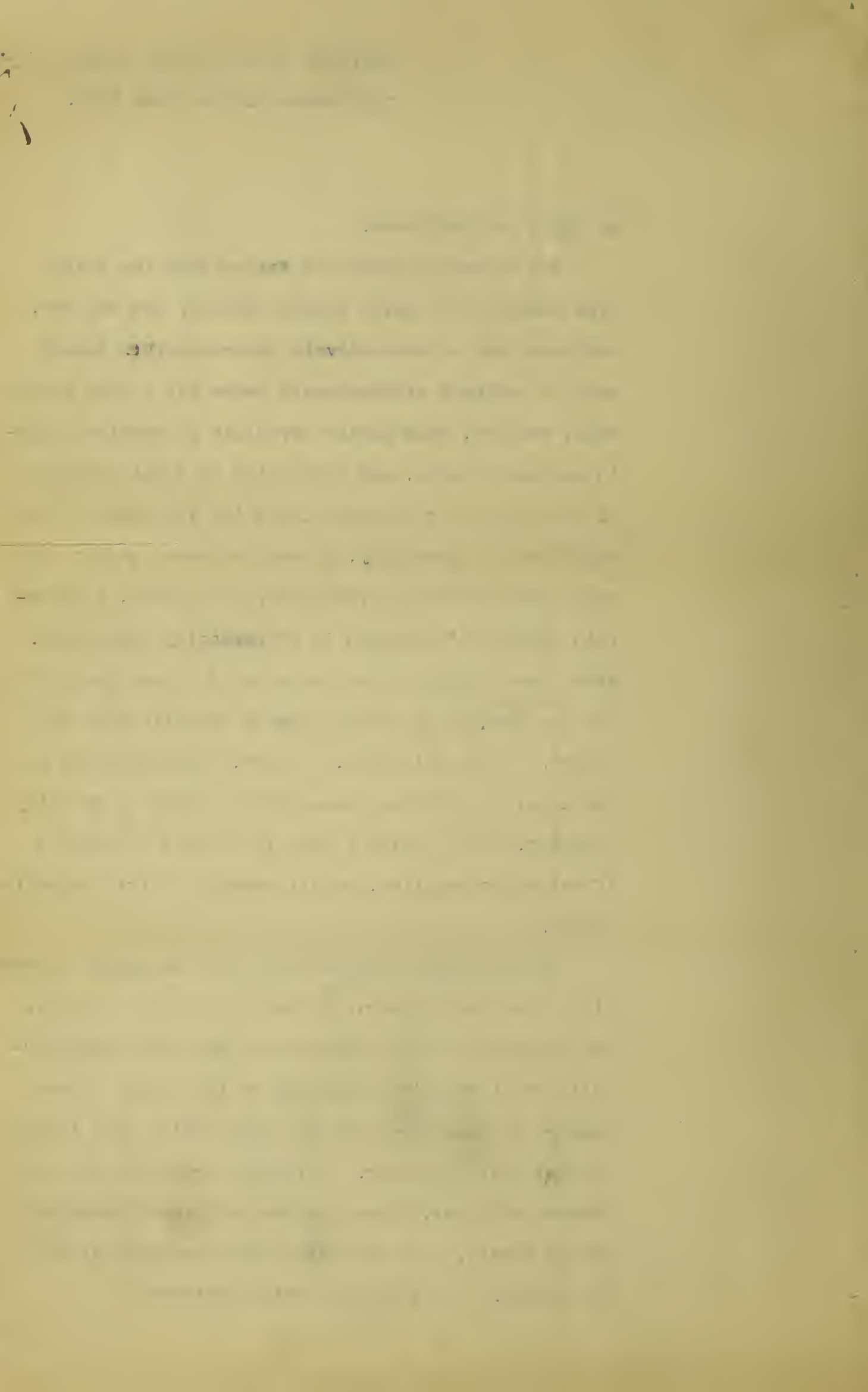
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SANITARY REPORT OF THE PARISH OF  
COLDINGHAM FOR THE YEAR 1898.

My LORDS and GENTLEMEN,

The materials available for writing the entire life history of a quiet country parish, are but few, and even such a comparatively comprehensive report must in ordinary circumstances prove but a tame affair. When, however, this parish chronicle is confined within narrower limits, and restricted to a bald recital of the state of the weather, and its influence on the health of the community, it must be tamer still; but when such reports are repeated year by year, a three-fold element of tameness is of necessity introduced. From these remarks it may seem as if I were paving the way for framing an apology for an exceptionally dull report. I do not think, however, that such need be the case, as there are some details noted in my daily register, out of which I hope to be able to compile if not an instructive, at all events a fairly readable report.

In the future the year 1898 will be ranked in the list of memorable year, for one out of many reasons, the mildness of the weather which has been characteristic of it from its beginning to its close. From January to December there has been really very little typical winter weather. With the exception of a few touches of frost, there has been an almost unbroken run of warmth, of a character quite exceptional for the season. So far as my notes indicate/



indicate, from January to December, frost occurred on only six or seven occasions for periods of only a day's continuance at a time, and the lowest point reached by the thermometer, and that only on one single occasion, was  $6^{\circ}$  below freezing point. The year may therefore with some reason be styled a fair weather year. Storms have been few, rainfall has been light. The winter and spring were mild, the summer began early and ended late, and warmth, sunshine and fair skies have been prolonged to the end of the year; and but for the terrific equinoctial gale of October - reminding Berwickshire of the disastrous gale of sixteen years ago - the record of a mild, uneventful year would have been unbroken.

If the year has been meteorologically remarkable, it has not been altogether uninteresting from a medical point of view. And in my opinion there are three occurrences, so far as the parish of Coldingham is concerned, which are worthy of mention, and will mark out the year 1898 as a memorable year.

1st. Diphtheria sprang up at several centres throughout the parish.

2nd. Sporadic cases of Scarlet Fever.

3rd. An epidemic outbreak of measles confined to the village of Coldingham.

There are a few points in connection with each of the above which suggest themselves to my mind, as not unworthy of mention; and first, in regard to the cases of Diphtheria, I think I have observed, so far as my practice is concerned, the prevalence of a form of follicular tonsillitis and pharyngitis for some weeks previous to any cases of diphtheria being reported. In this connection, and specially in absence of any distinct source of infection, and I am/

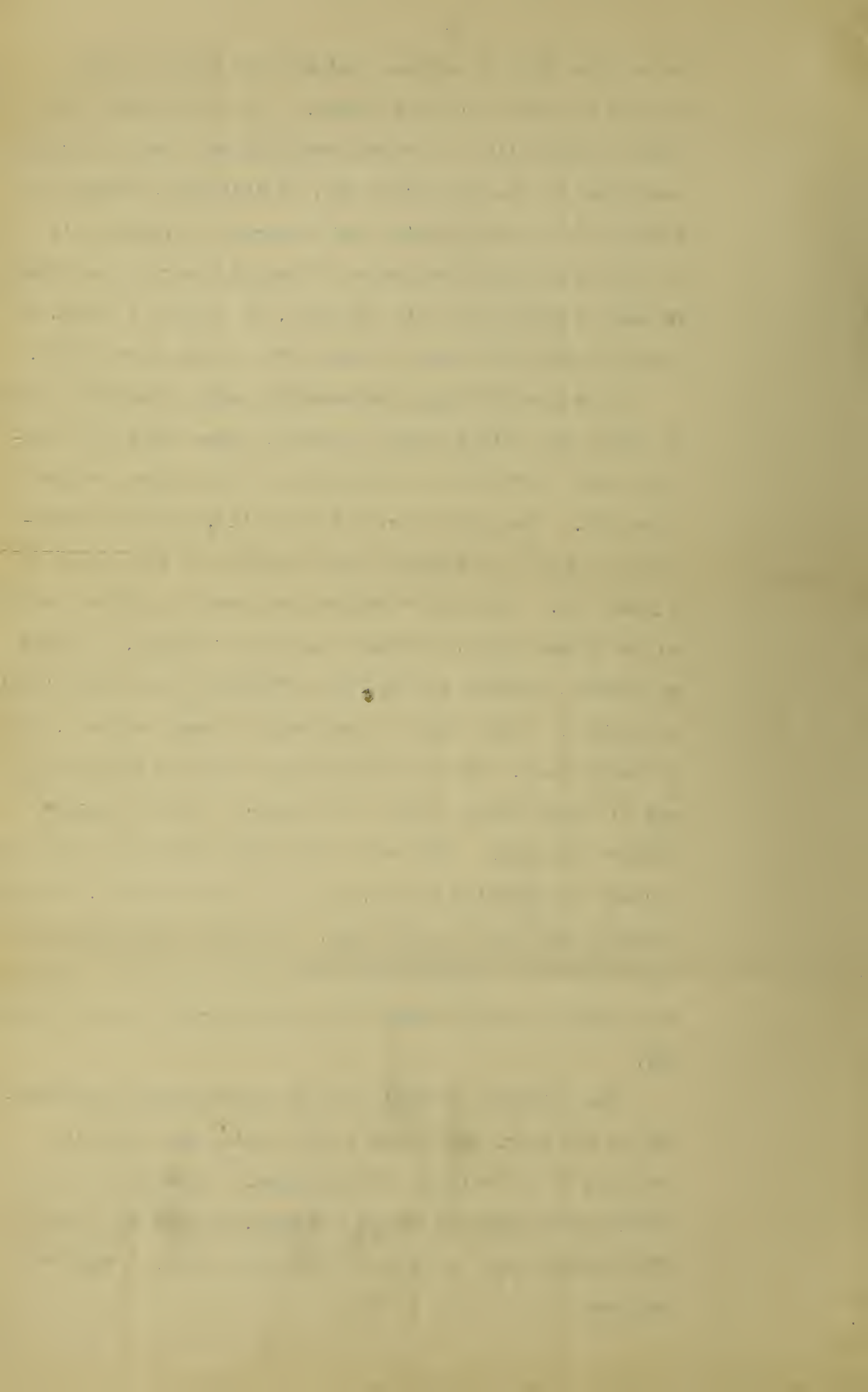




am not sure that in any one instance the origin of the disease has been certainly traced. Is it possible that simple tonsillitis in certain constitutions, and in certain conditions of the atmosphere may, if neglected, become developed into true diphtheria by preparing a fitting soil for the growth and development of the diphtheritic bacillus? If such should prove to be the case, it points, I think, to a very careful treatment of cases of ordinary sore throat.

In the second case, the sporadic cases of scarlet fever, at times and centres widely separate, there has been an almost equal difficulty in accounting for the source of the infection. The cases have all been mild, with the exception of one of a malignant type at Reston in the person of a young man. He came to Reston from Duns in perfect health, on the Sunday night, attended the sale on Monday, sickened on Tuesday, removed to hospital on Thursday, and died almost on arrival. This case is remarkable in many respects, but is exceptional, from the circumstance that the young man was in robust health before the seizure, and the family history was good. The rule being that such cases occur in persons of enfeebled health, and of a weak ancestry, neither of which held good in this case. The late appearance of the eruption is another noteworthy and exceptional feature. The eruption did not appear till the afternoon of the fourth day.

The epidemic of measles is the third medical peculiarity of the year, and has up to this date been strictly confined to the village of Coldingham. Sporadic cases of measles have occurred during the year, but not until the 27th November had it assumed an epidemic form. When 50 children/





children were simultaneously seized and 30 others after an interval of from 10 to 12 days. The visitation has been of a mild type and in consequence of the mildness of the weather, pulmonary and bronchial affections, which are so common in this disease, have been comparatively few. There has been a good deal written in regard to placing measles among the notifiable diseases, and at one time I was in favour of this being done. My experience, however, gained during this epidemic has considerably shaken me in this opinion; for if notification be mainly, if not wholly addressed to the stamping out of a disease, I feel convinced that nothing can be gained by this being done in regard to measles, as it is undoubtedly most infectious during the pre-eruption stage, when it is quite impossible to distinguish the disease from an ordinary cold. The same remarks, in my opinion, apply to whooping cough; and the only practical conclusion to be drawn from these facts is, that during an epidemic of measles or whooping cough, a child who suffers from a cold in the head should not be allowed to mix with others, and not be permitted to attend school till the incubation period has elapsed.

After this summary of the year, I will proceed to give a short analysis of the Registrar's returns. With the exception of these three visitations of infectious diseases, the general health of the parish has been fully up to the average of former years. The number of deaths has been **53**, forty-one in the Coldingham district, and twelve in the Grantshouse. The birth rate has been higher than for several years, having reached the high level of 38. This is the highest proportion of birth to death rate which it has been my privilege to report. Of the 53 deaths, **33** were males/



males, and **20** females; and of the 38 births, 49 were males, and 39 females, which is very near the ordinary birth and death rate proportion. Of the 14 births in the Grantshouse district, two were illegitimate, and of the 74 in Coldingham district, there were 5 illegitimate. The chief causes of death were tubercular disease, which accounted for 10 deaths. 5 deaths were due to acute infectious diseases, 3 to diphtheria, 1 to a malignant form of scarlet fever, and 1 to a malignant form of measles. Diseases of the nervous system were the causes of death in 12 instances, 5 deaths were caused by intestinal diseases. Inflammation of the lungs was the cause of death in only 1 adult, following upon influenza, and 2 in infants complicating measles. There was only 1 death from bronchitis in an infant of 7 weeks. Heart disease was the direct cause of death in 2 cases. Cancerous disease caused death in 4 cases. There were 6 deaths in infants under 1 year, and only 1 under 5 years. Children's diseases were conspicuous by their absence during the year. The largest mortality occurred in persons over 60 years of age. Of the 11 deaths in the Grantshouse district, five took place in persons above 70 and 12 in the Coldingham district were above 70 and 4 above 80. The oldest person who died during the year had attained the age of 85. I will now give a few details in regard to each month of the year, as regards the state of the weather and the health of the parish.

January: The month of January was perhaps one of the most remarkable on record, as the mean temperature was enormously in excess of the average, and the rainfall was less than half the normal. Thus speaking generally the thermometer/





thermometer may be said never to have reached the freezing point, except on one or two occasions, when my records indicate  $4^{\circ}$  of frost. Some days during the month the thermometer reached  $58^{\circ}$  which I understand is  $16^{\circ}$  above the average and  $3^{\circ}$  in excess of the Januaries of the past 25 years. Fogs have prevailed during the month, but there has also been an unusual amount of bright sunshine. Although the weather has been so exceptionally mild, and the health of the community upon the whole has been fully up to the average, there were several cases of inflammation of the lungs, bronchitis, and influenzal colds. Of the five deaths which occurred during the month none of them were, as regards causation, connected with the weather, but all of them were due to chronic pulmonary and nervous affections, in many instances of some years' duration. There was one case of scarlet fever at St. Abbs, the origin of which it was not possible to trace. Very strict isolation was observed and no other cases occurred at the time.

February: February set in with a clear, bright, one would almost say, a brilliantly fine day; on the 4th, however, there was the first really winter day of the year, frost and snow, and strong cold north winds, increasing in intensity to a gale towards evening. There was a considerable fall of snow on the 5th, which was preceded by a dark cloud and a loud thunder clap, an experience which is rather unusual in the month of February. Frost and snow, with strong cold northerly winds may have been said to characterise the month till its close. The frost was at no time very severe,  $3^{\circ}$  below freezing being the lowest point reached during the month. The falls of snow were on some occasions considerable. The prevailing winds having been land winds, it has proved a bad year for fishermen, & the reason assigned was





that the fishes' food was driven out to sea. The health of the parish was fairly good during the whole of this month, the prevailing disease was Influenza, complicated in several cases by inflammation of the lungs and bronchitis, and was the immediate cause of death in 4 out of the 5 fatal cases which took place during the month.

March: Thoroughly seasonable weather was experienced throughout the parish during the first week of this month. There were some heavy snow showers and several degrees of frost were registered, with north-west and south-west bitterly cold winds. The long spell of rainless weather which prevailed for some time past was broken on the 12th of the month, by a drizzling rain with a wind due west. The third week was characterised by strong winds, but otherwise pleasant weather, with bracing north-westerly winds, constituting it an ideal March week. Changeable weather with strong gales and blinding snow showers occurred often during the fourth week, some days being bright, fair and pleasant and others cold, wet and boisterous. There is nothing noteworthy in regard to the health of the Parish during the month further than that influenza prevailed as an epidemic throughout the parish and was in its after effects accountable for two of the three deaths which occurred during its course. The month of March is usually a very poor month for fishermen, but this year it beats the record in being exceptionally so, several boats only catching only a few dozen fishes. Some of the larger Eyemouth boats which went distances of upwards of 100 miles got fair catches of from fifteen to thirty boxes, but the smaller boats at St. Abb's have had a miserable fishing.



April. A clear, mild, bright day ushered in the month of April with typical spring like weather, but the week as a whole could not be characterised otherwise than changeable, which had however a beneficial effect on vegetation. The poplar was in leaf on the 9th. Until the 17th the weather was very pleasant the atmosphere in the daytime was genial, though in the evenings after sunset it fell considerably. It was mild and agreeable with an absence of rain, though cloudy and overcast till the 24th when a marked contrast took place, and the month closed with cold weather, and rain fell heavily. The maximum temperature throughout the month during the day was  $62^{\circ}$  ~~of frost~~, and the minimum,  $26^{\circ}$  indicating  $6^{\circ}$  of frost, which had a very hurtful effect on vegetation. The prevailing winds were West and South-West. The swallow was first observed in Coldingham Moors on the 20th of the month. A few scattered cases of influenza is the only record of disease. There were three deaths, one of which resulted from head affection after influenza.

May. A bright, clear, sunny day with a mild South-West wind ushered in a model May morning, and the cuckoo was first heard in Coldingham Moors. It is somewhat singular that the coldest, bleakest part of the Parish was <sup>first</sup> visited by these two "Messengers of Spring". The genial weather of the **first** day did not however, long continue, as dull, cold, rainy weather followed, and continued till the **middle** of the month. During the second week there were only two really good days, and with these exceptions, the weather was dull and raw. Notwithstanding these rather untoward conditions, vegetation advanced/







advanced rapidly, and the magnificent foliage of the trees was a noticeable feature. It was interesting to observe the progressive unfolding of the foliage. The following according to my observations is the order of succession in budding, and bursting into leaf of some of the more common trees, and shrubs in our district. The poplar, plane, beech and elder are first in full leaf, the elm and hazel follow and in ordinary years are earlier in leaf near the sea. The ash and oak are latest in leafing. This year the oak was a few days earlier than the ash which has not given support to the proverb of this being an indication that the winter would be a severe one. The hawthorn, briar, and bramble were not in full leaf till the 17th. Late switched hedges presented a dead, dark, bleak appearance in the surrounding greenness. The last week or ten days of the month was variable, bright sunshine, and dull cold weather, being experienced in turn. The highest temperature reached during the month was 64°, and the lowest 32° when there was a few hours frost on the 25th in the early morning. There is practically no record of disease worth noting. There were three deaths during the month.

June. My register of the first day of June is, frequent deluges of rain, and hail. As the day grew older the sun broke out, and a wind from the South-east sprang up. The whole experience was a miniature of March and April. Fruit blossom has severely suffered during the last few days. The temperature of the last two days of the first week has been very summer like, and pleasant. The second



week was changeable with some good days, when the highest temperature registered was 75° . The two last weeks were with few exceptions all that could be desired as summer weeks. The thermometer registered as high as 79°, on one or two occasions. The month from a medical stand point, was the fullest and most noteworthy of the year.

Three cases of diphtheria were reported as occurring at Houndwood Manse and a case of scarlet fever at Reston Hill. Five cases of inflammation of the lungs of an infective character originated in one household in Coldingham Moors. The first case of diphtheria at Houndwood Manse was in the person of a lad of 14 years of age in attendance at Duns Academy and, whether the disease was contracted at school or originated from defective drainage at the Manse are points to be disputed. Much might be advanced in support of both sources of origin, but we refrain as we are not in possession of sufficient data upon which to found a definite conclusion. The case of scarlet fever was introduced from the Public School at Ayton. The cases of Pneumonia are interesting as being evidently of the nature of a specific infective fever, and due in all likelihood to a specific microbe. The N. & N. W. winds which prevailed at the time may have had a strong predisposing if not an inducing effect. Five deaths occurred this month one of which resulted from diphtheria and the other 4 in persons above 70 years of age, two of which were above 80.

Pleasant/





July. Pleasant weather was experienced during the first week of this month, the average temperature being 70°, clear bright, as a rule, but sometimes dull, and cloudy, but rainless. The 15th St. Swithins day was beautiful, clear, and dry, and very warm throughout. Notwithstanding that St. Swithin's day passed off without a drop of rain, the spell of droughty weather was broken on the 16th, <sup>so that</sup> the rhyme

"St. Swithin's Day, if thou dost rain,  
For forty days it will remain,  
St. Swithins Day if thou be fair,  
For forty days 'twill rain nae mair."

has not been true or proved to be correct. The latter half of the month ~~then~~ was mild, settled weather and upon the whole a small rainfall.

Two cases of diphtheria, both of them in the Grantshouse district of the Parish, ~~were~~ notified, and both of these terminated fatally. Another case of scarlet fever in the same household at Reston Hill was reported. Complaints were made to me as to the drainage of Murrayfield, St. Abbs. I communicated with the Sanitary Inspector and on the 23rd of the month we visited in company and carefully examined into the matter complained of, and found the drainage here and at Northfield Farm steading very faulty, not having been properly laid. Mr. Usher was to have the matter rectified at once.

There were six deaths in the course of the month. Two of them were due to diphtheria. The four deaths in/





in the Coldingham district were, three of them due to Tubercular disease and one from Senility in a man of 85.

August. There was a marked change in the weather during the first week in August, compared with that enjoyed throughout July. It was alternately cloudy and bright, with occasional heavy showers. The second week was the hottest experienced this summer. The highest reading of the thermometer was 76°. The third week was bright and warm with the exception of one day when there was thunder and lightning with a heavy rainfall. The last ten days of the month may be spoken of as changeable and at times disagreeable. Clouds and sunshine occurring at irregular intervals, and sometimes rain fell heavily. There is nothing of medical interest to report. Three deaths took place in the course of the month, all of these from chronic ailments.

September. The first half of this month is noteworthy as the warmest weeks of the year. The maximum temperature being 82°, and the minimum temperature at night rarely fell below 60°. From the 17th to the end of the month there was a steady fall of temperature from the earlier part of the month. Despite the cold winds, the weather was very pleasant, and admirably suited for harvest operations. The excessive heats brought on a large number of cases of diarrhoea. An unusual number of accidents happened during the month of greater and lesser severity,



ten having occurred in my practice. None of them were fatal. There were five deaths during the month, one in an infant of 11 weeks from diarrhoea, one from Pulmonary Phthisis, two were in persons advanced in life, the oldest being 82. The other death was due to suicide.

October: Brought a disagreeable change in the weather. Throughout a large part of the month high winds prevailed. For three or four days from the 16th a severe gale swept over the country, doing a great deal of damage by land and sea. On the 30th a severe cyclone swept over the country, the centre of which, it is said, was found off the Berwickshire coast. The last weeks of the month there was average weather. Five cases of scarlet fever were certified from widely separated parts of the parish; one of the cases was of a very malignant form. The case was removed to hospital, but <sup>the person</sup> died very shortly after arrival. With these exceptions, the health of the parish was fairly good.

November: The weather of the first week of the month was in marked contrast with the boisterous conditions prevailing in the latter end of October. It was mild throughout the week, with frequent showers of rain. Changeable weather followed and continued with more or less frequent intermissions of bright sunshine, with showery weather almost till the close of the month, the month ending with wretched weather of soft drifting snow storms.

An epidemic of measles suddenly broke out in the village/







village of Coldingham, forty or fifty children having been simultaneously attacked on the 27th of the month. Those who were first seized were children in the Public School, and, almost in every instance, confined to those who occupied the room devoted to the Infants. In consequence of this wide spread outbreak, I found it advisable to close the Public School, which was done by an intimation from both pulpits on Sabbath the 28th. Four deaths occurred in course of the month. One resulted from acute pneumonia, complicating what I feel inclined to call a fulminant or lightning-like form of malignant measles. The child only survived a few hours after being seized. The other deaths were due to chronic pulmonary, renal and cerebral diseases.

December: I should say that unseasonable mildness was what was most characteristic of the month of December, and in this connection it may not be out of place to remark that this mildness accounts for the comparatively few pulmonary complications observed during the visitation of measles, and the frequency with which intestinal affections occurred. On the 9th, 10th and 11th of the month there was a fresh outbreak of 20 cases. Two cases of scarlet fever were reported on the Grantshouse district. There was a suspicion that these cases were imported from Edinburgh. A case of diphtheria was reported at Coveyhaugh and sent to hospital.

The dairies, bakeries, cowsheds, and parochial lodging house, have been visited at stated intervals, and/



and all of them found to be in a satisfactory condition.

I have the honour to remain,

My Lords & Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

*James Dougall M. D.*

Medical Officer Of Health for  
the Parish of Coldingham.

*Coldingham*  
*24<sup>th</sup> Jan<sup>y</sup>. 1899* }

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Coldingham

22<sup>nd</sup> Jan<sup>r</sup>. 1898

Mr. Spencer Honeyman  
British Medical Assn.

Dear Sir.

I have to apologise for sending  
such a wretched Report  
but I have been so busied with  
work that I have really had  
no time to bestow upon it,  
hence in compensation and  
spenmanship it is barely present-  
able. If you deem it unworthy of  
preservation so it not be offended  
by it being thrown into the waste-  
basket.

Yours faithfully  
L. M. Dougall

